

Review of The First Civilization

The First Civilization by Jas Garcha,
Copyright 2012, a freely available online book,
e.g. <http://blog.thezeitgeistmovement.com/de/node/2804>
audio: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBJY_SF5v6o&hd=1

A review by Avian Weter, Europe, under
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The First Civilization by Jas Garcha is a well-written introduction into a resource-based economy (RBE). The arguments are scientific and substantiated by 138 citations in the reference section. The book gives full credit to Jacque Fresco and his life-work, The Venus Project. After presenting the basic ideas in the first part, Jas Garcha logically answers typical objections and gives a long-term plan with considerable detail how to test whether the RBE concept actually works while moving towards it at the same time.

What we have had until now have been societies only; a true civilization is yet to come (hence the book's title). Then the whole of humankind will be empowered by automation to thrive fully. Moreover, resources will be sustained for the longest time.

Garcha stresses the preeminence of the environment on gene-expression and hence human behavior. Here are some examples:

- Laziness is induced by a job with no control, by *having* to work for money. Self-directed creativity on the other hand is its own motivator.
- „[Children] associate competition with greater self-esteem in competitive societies, and they associate cooperation with greater self-esteem in cooperative societies ... we are born with the capacity for either type of behavior.”
- Competition does only further speed, *not* more innovation or production. Only cooperation does a job really well.

The central aims of an RBE are concisely presented. The author admits that most of the ideas are from Jacque Fresco, and that he only tries to combine these with ideas of his own. He considers his ideas a prototype, to be replaced probably with superior ideas when the RBE is implemented.

Among the ideas are:

Various ecologically clean energy sources, using supercapacitors to store energy.

Aeroponics and hydroponics for producing organic, pesticide-free food, even artificial meat. That food could be grown right about the corner, in the same building even. Clean water can be condensed from the atmosphere.

3D-printing is seen as an important manufacturing technology. Plastics can be made from plants, so no mineral oil is needed. Products can be even more customized than they are today, e.g. a globally unique shirt, specially manufactured from the specifications (cut, size, fabric, pattern, etc) of the individual who wants to wear it.

Education is not driven by competition, but will be free to all.

Research will no longer be hindered by profit-hungry grant-givers.

Arts will multiply, since nobody needs to work for money.

The author foresees that much more things are used by several users and thus a huge expansion of lending. The associated database can then be used to predict demand and optimize supply. In this way, there are always enough things available.

Current research on energy- and resource-efficient transport systems is presented (bit car, SkyTran™).

Jas Garcha foresees an increase in nomadic lifestyles because people are no longer tied to one place by having to work at a specific place.

He identifies the RBE as an open-source society, which means that everyone can contribute in her or his areas of expertise. Ideas are backed up by evidence, which is the only authority.

The questionnaire that the author imagines to be filled out by each one once a year to retain democratic control may only be useful in the first years of an RBE. Later these surveys could be done more accurately by automated sensors and the myriad suggestions that the logistic computer network will receive.

An RBE will do away with many problems we have today (like violence and war) but will be far from perfect. Jas Garcha foresees new problems to surface that we cannot even think of today. But he stresses that the egalitarian global society of an RBE with a great diversity among its members will be a vast improvement compared to the current primitive society of nation states governed by elites.

Daily life will be more diverse when the nine-to-five work week is abolished. People will still do research, travel, and have fun. Devices for communication and information access will become smaller, the cellphone will possibly be replaced by a small device that you carry like a medallion around your neck. These more versatile devices can take photos, project images and texts on any surface, and are operated by hand gestures only (google Sixth Sense).

Jas Garcha may do the RBE movement a disservice by describing how he would live in an RBE. That is, because the current world cultures openly embrace only certain recreational drugs. But these drugs vary from culture to culture. No culture embraces *all* recreational drugs (or even their use in spiritual practices). By talking about his personal preferences the author may repel people of those cultures who abhor the use of his personal favorite.

On the other hand, he is quite open about having lived the life of a privileged person, a lifestyle he describes as empty and signing the death warrant for our species, being cruel to the majority and completely ineffective.

It is in the Q&A part, where the importance of the necessary change of values is stressed:

The consumerism of today is identified as addiction: deriving pleasure from actions that have no physiological benefit and/or are actually harmful (if only in the long run). For an addict, there is no 'enough' - a perfect match for the growth ideology of the current monetary system.

The change of human values and behavior must be slow enough to be comfortable for all. In the course of this gradual change, the first communities will spring up that are based on RBE principles. This will show more people that this system actually works.

A rational way of allocating resources without price is possible. First, there is no point in assigning a price to goods and services that are abundantly available (like food or housing in an RBE). Second, the limitations of the historical centrally planned systems can be overcome by an automated survey system where the economic decisions are made by each *individual*.

Scarcity is overcome when every person has the right to have their needs met without worry.

Salary is not a real measure of spent effort.

No one needs to join a global RBE. For instance, nomadic traditional hunter-gatherer societies could live on in the 'wild' and still have technological benefits if they want that. Reservations are unnecessary and detrimental.

The author labels the RBE in common terms as 'anarcho-technocracy': Everyone is free to become an expert in her or his areas of choice and contribute to relevant decisions there. There is no 'ruling elite'. The system is more like a number of 'open source' projects, where those who understand the relevant matters can contribute.

In the current competitive monetary systems, a majority is forced to live equally dismal lives while an elite has a much higher standard of living. In an RBE, however, everyone enjoys a standard of living far above today. There is no forced labor, poverty, or social stratification, while real self-improvement towards excellence is possible. Capitalism, socialism, and nationalism have become obsolete - we must rid ourselves from the inequality that especially capitalism creates.

Governments emphasize differences between people on different sides of imaginary borders. Thus they can instigate hate and war. The sovereignty of nations was and is an illusion, especially in today's interconnected world.

The RBE is not the New World Order (NWO) or One World Government (OWG) that is feared by some. However, it will actually be the dissolution of the NWO/OWG that already exists in the form of transnational corporations and financial institutions as a result of capitalist logic. Contrary to a minority group controlling the rest, in an RBE every aspect of society is under the control of the entire population: the RBE actually is built to *prevent* accumulation of power in the hands of a small group.

An RBE is no stagnant utopia, but constantly evolving by solving current problems and advancing in all fields of knowledge. Things remain static only as long as practical.

As it depends heavily on technology and especially on computers, would not an RBE be vulnerable to disaster by technological failures? No, the education system will prevent this. The odds are very high that there will always be enough people to fix a problem.

In reply to the concern that a super-human computer intelligence might one day decide to extinguish humanity, Garcha argues that as long as humans do no harm to the planet this is highly unlikely. Moreover, the more intelligent a species is, the more it cares.

Overpopulation is improbable in an RBE, since affluent societies have low birth rates.

On the important point of the prioritization of the use of really rare resources, Garcha holds that if a material cannot be replaced, practicality has higher priority than superficiality (use gold for electronics rather than decoration). Materials science can probably supply substitutes for cases where the rare resource is not needed.

The entertainment industry will undergo a change. As more voluntary and individually meaningful activities are available, the addictive need of getaways will be reduced. There will be vibrant arts communities and projects from local to global sizes.

Within a few generations of an RBE, religions and beliefs will probably be replaced by other forms of spirituality and philosophy.

Some old cities will be kept as museum towns, but most will be dismantled.

The test for an RBE is described like this:

„Gather the knowledge, test the technology, test the basic concept on a small scale with very few variables, slowly increase the scale while adding variables and complexity, test the concept on a larger scale, and use this as a platform for further expansion and implementation.” The ultimate goal is a working colony or city that can act as example to the world.

To achieve progress with the needed caution and flexibility, an annual cross-discipline conference is proposed. Computer models are needed and even the development process of the various test societies itself must be researched, let alone ways to overcome the mountains of bureaucracy.

Although the first production sites based on RBE principles will be still within the capitalistic system, its profits could be used to further the RBE development or other altruistic purposes. It is estimated that this test phase will last up to five years. However, after the end of the experiment, the return of the individuals involved in such a test venture into the capitalist society may be problematic.

After the automatic production concept is proven, a small village or tower with up to 100 adults should be the next step. Its success will be monitored by regular medical, psychological, and environmental tests. Although the first community will still be connected to the monetary system, it is expected that the later larger and more complex experiments can become completely autonomous.

At a that later stage, even persons with known past violent behavior can be accepted into the community. This is a crucial test for the community's non-violent environment (similar to the reduced violence in Kibbutzim).

The next step may then be the colonization of the ocean. Perhaps first with small communities in the form of micro-nations in international waters.

If about 10% of a population is convinced of a new idea, it becomes more acceptable and spreads faster in the society. How do we ensure that this happens for the RBE concept as a viable alternative to traditional lifestyles? Educate about the benefits for the individual, present scientific evidence, show working prototypes, and the RBE idea will grow.

It is estimated that this transition will take 25 years or more.

Whether the current system collapses or not, it is in our best interest to have some working prototype of an RBE.

The social systems used in human history did not work well. So let's build something that *does*. Jas Garcha has shown some important steps towards that goal.

**„It makes logical sense for us to all love each other as equals,
to live in peace and harmony with nature and with each other,
and it is physically possible to accomplish all of this *right now*.“**

Overall, a fine in-depth re-statement and extrapolation of Jacque Fresco's ideas, the RBE is rightly identified as a most promising venture, unlike anything that has ever been tried in human history.

It is hoped that this book will be translated into other major languages.